

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1691

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 9004

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS, UR

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES THE ME

REF: MOSCOW 8864

1. SUMMARY: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR ISMAIL TOLD ME JUNE 27
THAT HE BELIEVED THE SOVIETS WERE STILL AIMING FOR A RECON-
VENED GENEVA CONFERENCE IN SOME FORM, EVEN THOUGH THEIR
DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY HAS QUIETED RECENTLY. HE FORESAW
THE POSSIBILITY OF A FIRST STAGE CONFERENCE THIS YEAR
(WITHOUT PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION) TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE
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OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. A SECOND MEETING IN 1976 OR 1977

COULD INCLUDE THE PLO IN SOME FASHION. EGYPT'S RELATIONS WITH THE USSR REMAIN VERY IMPORTANT TO CAIRO, AND ISMAIL SAW NO THREAT TO EGYPT IN THE RECENT SOVIET-LIBYAN ARMS AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MY CALL ON JUNE 27, EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HAFEX ISLAMI SAID HE BELIEVED SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY REMAINS DIRECTED TOWARD A RECONVENED GENEVA CONFERENCE, BUT HE OFFERED NO INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE DATES. ACCORDING TO ISMAIL, THE SOVIETS, ALTHOUGH NOT AS DIPLOMATICALLY ACTIVE AS BEFORE, ARE MAINTAINING CONTACTS WITH ALL PARTIES (INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS) IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SITUATION IN WHICH A NEW MEPC, IN SOME FORM, COULD BE HELD. IN ISMAIL'S SCENARIO, A NEW CONFERENCE WOULD BE DEVOTED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERIM AGREEMENTS PREVIOUSLY REACHED ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL; THIS WOULD SATISFY THE CONDITION THAT THEY WERE "WITHIN THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK." ISMAIL FORESAW THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD MAKE THESE INTERIM AGREEMENTS (E.G., AN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DISENGAGEMENT) MORE PALATABLE FOR SOME PARTIES, NAMELY SYRIA. HE FORESAW, IN FACT, THAT THE MEPC WOULD USUALLY WORK IN THIS FASHION, I.E., TO IMPLEMENT DETAILS OF AGREEMENTS MADE OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE ITSELF.

3. TURNING TO PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, ISMAIL FELT IT CONCEIVABLE TO HOLD THE FIRST STAGE OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE THIS YEAR, WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PALESTINIANS. THIS SESSION WOULD CONSIDER THE ISSUE OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, AND THE PALESTINIANS COULD BE TOLD THAT EGYPT AND SYRIA WOULD, IF NECESSARY, DEFEND PALESTINIAN INTERESTS. THE PLO COULD ATTEND A SECOND CONFERENCE (IN 1976 OR 1977). HOPEFULLY, THE PROBLEM ABOUT THE FORM OF THEIR PARTICIPATION WOULD HAVE BEEN EASED BY THEN. ISMAIL THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE THE PALESTINIANS COULD ATTEND AS PART OF THE SYRIAN OR JORDANIAN DELEGATIONS, BUT NOT AS PART OF AN ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION. COMMENT: DISPLAYING SOME SENSITIVITY, ISMAIL SAID THAT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND NOT THE PALESTINIANS IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE. END COMMENT. ISMAIL ANTICIPATES CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT LEBANON PROBABLY WOULD WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN A SECOND PHASE OF THE MEPC.

4. ISMAIL EMPHASIZED THAT, DESPITE SOME OBVIOUS SURFACE PROBLEMS, CAIRO'S RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW ARE AND WILL REMAIN VERY IMPORTANT TO EGYPT. HE STRESSED THERE IS A LIMIT BEYOND WHICH PRESIDENT SADAT WILL NOT GO IN CRITICIZING THE SOVIET UNION OR IN

LESSENING EGYPT'S TIES WITH THE USSR. ISMAIL DOWN-PLAYED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, REMARKING THAT EGYPT HAS BEGUN RECEIVING MIRAGES. HE SAID THE QUESTION OF RESCHEDULING EGYPT'S DEBT REPAYMENT REMAINS UNRESOLVED BUT FELT THIS WAS NOT A PARTICULARLY URGENT PROBLEM. ISMAIL HAD NO NEW INFORMATION ON A POSSIBLE GROMYKO TRIP TO CARIO, AND COMMENTED THAT A BREZHNEV TRIP "HAS BEEN SHELVED."

5. ISMAIL DESCRIBED LIBYA AS A POWER VACUUM INTO WHICH THE USSR IS MOVING, BUT HE IS CONVINCED THE SOVIETS HAVE NO ILLUSIONS RE QADHAFI. HOWEVER, ISMAIL SEES NO DANGER TO EGYPT IN THE RECENT SOVIET-LIBYAN ARMS DEAL.

6. COMMENT: ISMAIL'S THOUGHTS RE GENEVA ARE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH CURRENT SOVIET THINKING (REFTEL) EXCEPT ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. HIS IRRITATION ABOUT THE PALESTINIANS HOLDING CENTER STAGE MIGHT STEM FROM SOVIET INSISTENCE THAT THIS ISSUE TAKE PRIORITY IN REACHING AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT.
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